

audiences to various aspects of Native American culture. Princess Pocahontas is accompanied by her court of Indian maidens and chieftains during the festival, and they pay homage to the Great Spirit with Native American rituals and dances. One quintessential part of the Princess Pocahontas tradition is that she rides on a horse, with the key to the City of Laredo in her hand as a reminder of the first ceremony in which she saved the citizens of Laredo in the first Washington Birthday Celebration. This year, Princess Pocahontas will be portrayed by Ms. Liza Nicole Gonzalez at the 111th Princess Pocahontas Pageant and Ball on February 16, 2008.

Madam Speaker, I am honored to have had this time to recognize the long history behind the Princess Pocahontas Pageant and Ball.

HONORING ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA SORORITY OF AMERICA

HON. JOSÉ E. SERRANO

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 7, 2008

Mr. SERRANO. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority of America on the occasion of its centennial anniversary in January, 2008. The Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA) Sorority is the first African American sorority in America to reach the milestone of 100 years, and represents the first Greek-letter organization in this country founded by, and for, African American college women. The AKA motto is to "provide service to all mankind." Over the years, AKA members have broken barriers and attained positions in American society of tremendous distinction. The AKA sisterhood prides itself on achievement, sacrifice, and a strong belief in the limitless potential of women of color. Together, the AKA's strive for the betterment not only of themselves, but their families, their neighborhoods, and the larger global community.

From its founding in 1908, through 1921, Alpha Kappa Alpha underwent a period of significant growth. Chapters were first established throughout the Northeast and Midwest, and beginning in the mid 1920's, AKA founded new chapters in the Southeast. One of the most remarkable aspects of the AKA sorority is the history of its original nine founding members. Born during the Reconstruction era, and enrolling at Howard University at the turn of the 20th century, the founding AKA women embodied courage and soaring intellect. During a time in our nation's history when African Americans, and women especially, were viewed as second class citizens, the original AKA sisters coalesced around an affirmation of their own dignity. They taught women of color across the Nation that belief in one's self, in one's potential, is the essential building block upon which anything is possible. In a dark chapter of our history, theirs was a message of light—of hope, sacrifice and hard work in the pursuit of self-determination.

This summer, more than 20,000 members of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority will come together on the campus of Washington, DC's

Howard University to honor this legacy. Sorors from around the world will retrace the steps taken by the founding members ten decades ago in what is being called the "Walk Through History." Discussions and plenary sessions will be convened, where together, members will rededicate themselves to the founding principles of the AKA tradition and chart a new course for the next 100 years.

Madam Speaker, I am moved by the Alpha Kappa Alpha's prodigious historical narrative. The redoubtable strength and prescient vision of the founders paved the way for a sorority which today claims more than 200,000 members, 975 chapters, and a presence not only in the United States, but also the Caribbean, Canada, Germany, Korea, Japan, and the continent of Africa. Their unifying mission remains to serve others, while also challenging themselves and their fellow sisters to reach higher for the possible. On behalf of the nearly 3,000 members of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority who reside throughout the 16th Congressional District of New York, and the surrounding counties, as well as myself, I ask that my colleagues join me in paying tribute to this most storied American sisterhood.

EXTENDING PARITY IN APPLICATION OF CERTAIN LIMITS TO MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS

SPEECH OF

HON. CIRO D. RODRIGUEZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 6, 2008

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Madam Speaker, today I stand in support of H.R. 4848, extension for 1 year, parity in the application of certain limits to mental health benefits.

H.R. 4848 would amend the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA), and the Public Health Service Act to extend until December 31, 2008, mental health parity provisions, which require group health plans to treat equally mental health benefits and medical and surgical benefits for purposes of lifetime limits or annual limits on benefits covered by the plan.

Approximately two-thirds of individuals with potentially diagnosable disorders do not seek treatment. A majority of insured and uninsured individuals suffering from untreated mental health disorders mention cost as the primary reason that they do not use or seek mental health treatment. This is due in part to unequal health insurance coverage for mental health services, which results in significant cost-shifting from private insure to individuals.

As a former social worker, I personally know untreated mental illness is associated with a number of societal problems. Such as, higher rates of unemployment, crime and increased welfare cost.

Parity for mental health is needed because, left on their own very few employers would offer mental health benefits at a level that is equal to medical and surgical benefits in their group health plan.

Mental health is a serious issue facing many Americans. The goal of H.R. 4848 is to make

sure everyone gets effective quality treatment for mental illness. In order for that to happen, mental illness needs to be treated just like other surgical and medical treatments.

IN CELEBRATION OF THE 74TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE COLUMBUS ALUMNAE CHAPTER OF DELTA SIGMA THETA SORORITY, INC.

HON. STEPHANIE TUBBS JONES

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 7, 2008

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Madam Speaker, I rise today in honor of the 74th anniversary of the Columbus, Ohio Alumnae Chapter of my beloved sorority Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated. Chartered on May 20, 1934, the Columbus Alumnae chapter was the 66th chapter of the sorority. Additionally, Delta Sigma Theta, a public service, non-profit organization, will celebrate 95 years of service, locally and globally, this year.

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. is a sorority of predominantly Black college-educated women founded here in Washington, DC at Howard University in 1913. The major programs of our sorority revolve around our Five Point Thrust of: economic development, educational development, international awareness and involvement, physical and mental health, and political awareness and involvement. With over 250,000 members, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority works to continue the vision of our 22 Founders.

This year, during their annual Founder's Day Luncheon, the Columbus Alumnae Chapter highlight the many activities they have been engaged in that have contributed to the betterment of the Columbus area including youth Read-Ins, Scholarships to High School graduates, mentorship, and art and culture programs. Additionally, they will recognize African American women in the Columbus area who have demonstrated a strong commitment to the community during their annual Founders Day Luncheon.

Therefore, I commend the Columbus Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. for their commitment to the people of Columbus, Ohio and across this country. I join with them in this celebration and thank them for their enduring commitment to the sisterhood, scholarship, and service of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. PAUL RYAN

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 7, 2008

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Madam Speaker, on rollcall No. 29, H. Res. 867, commending the Houston Dynamos for winning the 2007 Major League Soccer Cup, I was absent due to inclement weather grounding flights in Wisconsin.

Had I been present, I would have voted "aye."